1: Warner E-5 (1926-1929)1937
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tunity in the field would allow were collected. *Before* seeing a ceremony I interviewed, as many times as possible, the leader and principal participants. *While* the ceremony was taking place I wrote careful descriptions and interviewed bystanders, or participants if possible. *After* the event I went over the two accounts and checked for discrepancies, and again interviewed. I repeated this many times. I collected a great number of accounts of the same myth and observed the variations and conformities of the several accounts. I made a detailed and accurate observation of the natural conditions to which the society is adapted—in particular, climatic changes and the adjustment of nature to them—and obtained native ideas and evaluations of the various phases of the weather and other changes in nature.[2]

B. *Classifying the Materials*

I analyzed the native accounts of myths and determined that they fell into dramatic sections or "movements," and these again into episodes. I lettered and gave descriptive titles to the dramatic sections (three in the Wawilak myth); and I numbered consecutively and summarized descriptively each of the episodes (ten in the Wawilak).

I analyzed the ceremonies and determined that these likewise fell into dramatic sections, and the sections again into groups of episodes (cohering elements of the rituals). The sections I lettered and gave descriptive names. Each subdivision (group of episodes) of a section I numbered, summarized analytically, and described fully. At the end of each *section* I wrote in the native interpretation of that section of the ceremony with respect to the myth.

In collecting these interpretations I used a free association method and did not question directly, allowing the native informants to tell what they thought about the ritual either while it was being enacted or when they were discussing it before or after its performance. These native interpretations constituted, then, a detailed study on the first level of interpretation, based on the meanings, beliefs, and attitudes the natives held explicitly and consciously about the various parts of the myths and rituals.

I ascertained that there is a connection between the myth and ritual, first by observing that the native mind *is* aware that there is a *general* connection (even though this awareness is only rationalization).[3]

[2] The Marndiella, Ulmark, and Yiritja Narra were not observed as completely and are not as completely described as the other ceremonies.

[3] In the earlier half of my field work I was unaware of the full significance of the

6: Berndt E-5 (1946-1947) 1951
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the guise of an Ancestral Being) is the proselytizer, the carrier of the germ of a religious idea, which is adopted by, and modified to suit, the social group in which he finds himself. Whether he brought with him the ingredients of that religion from his own "home", or whether it took shape in consequence of his contact with the alien people, is a matter for conjecture.

The diffusion of Aboriginal religious cults, such as the Kunapipi, also presents some interesting features. A certain amount of more or less "pure" evangelization has occurred in this respect; individual cult leaders, of both historic and contemporary society, have been interested in furthering the activities of the cult. But in their successful and unsuccessful attempts to introduce their particular beliefs into other groups, they take only the basis of their cult life, and do not as a rule attempt to superimpose their own cultural ideas and organization. In north-eastern Arnhem Land, for example, the Kunapipi, recognized by natives themselves as an introduced theme, has been fairly well integrated with existing social organization, religious life, and secular beliefs; even its mythology has been altered to meet the demands of local ethics, while the alien songs are interpreted in the light of indigenous criteria. Nevertheless, the basic ideology and construction of the Kunapipi cult remain: and it is this aspect which really concerns the proselytizer. The same process may be observed in other regions, such as western Arnhem Land, the Daly River-Port Keats area, and west-central Northern Territory.

* * * *

A word should be said concerning the presentation of Kunapipi Song Cycles (that is, in Chapters VII, VIII, X, and XI). Their value lies in their substantiation of the cult's doctrine, explaining its outward expression in ritual and in the use of ceremonial emblems and objects. Such traditional songs ensure that the original intent of the cult is not lost or radically misinterpreted. To-day, however, misinterpretation is possible as a result of conflicting loyalties arising from the contact of Aboriginal with European culture. In order to restrict ourselves to the literal interpretation of these songs, it has been found necessary to present them with an interlinear translation, a general rendering, and a brief commentary based on native interpretation: this method makes available the maximum amount of data. The phonetic script used conforms to that of the International Phonetic Association,[2] amended for use in Australia by Dr. A. Capell.[3]

2. G. Noel-Armfield, *General Phonetics*, 1931, pp. 21-23. *Vide* R. and C. Berndt, "A Preliminary Report of Field-Work in the Ooldea Region, Western South Australia", *Oceania Bound Reprint*, Sydney, 1945, pp. 262-264, or *Oceania*, Vol. XV, No. 1, pp. 50-52.
3. A. Capell, *Methods and Materials for Recording Australian Languages*, Sydney, 1945 (reprinted from *Oceania*, Vol. XVI, No. 2, pp. 144-176). Since the complete phonetic script was not available for rendering native words in this volume, some equivalents in ordinary English lettering have been used.

6: Berndt E-5 (1946-1947) 1951
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CHAPTER V

KUNAPIPI RITUAL IN DRAWING

In order to understand more fully certain parts of the Kunapipi ritual that have been already outlined, a series of interpretative drawings was obtained from aborigines. Each of these depicts in conventionalized form some aspects of the Kunapipi, and includes some points which the artist considered to be of major importance in understanding the function of the rituals. The six drawings illustrated and described here cover the main points of the Kunapipi ceremony.

Ceremonial elders and headmen at Yirrkalla delegated a middle-aged man, named Gumuk,[1] a Kunapipi leader, to prepare the following series of drawings on Kunapipi ritual. It is not the practice of these people to record their ceremonies in this way; normally, to demonstrate or expound some particular point, they would enact the ceremony instead of drawing it; neither would they attempt to draw such incidents on stringy-bark, the usual medium for expressing sacred or secular design and representation. The medium employed in these drawings was entirely foreign to the artist, who is accustomed to working in ochres with hair or root brushes, on a bark board; but, in this case, sheets of brown paper and coloured lumber crayons were adopted for convenience. It was not long before the native artists had adjusted themselves to this method of expression, and produced what we may term masterpieces, equal to the best of the bark-drawing which is their traditional form of art.[2]

Their value as artistic representations of this particular culture is incidental here to their value as documents illustrating the Kunapipi rituals. Through them we may see with a native's eyes what the people as a group, through the individual artist, consider important in this respect.

Photographs of ritual and ceremony record accurately specific incidents divorced to some extent from the whole; they are in themselves impersonal. But drawings of the same or similar incidents, by

1. *Vide* Chapter VI, where some of his dreams are discussed.
2. Collections of both bark and brown paper drawings are at present housed in the Department of Anthropology, University of Sydney, for the Australian National Research Council.
   For discussion of bark painting, see *Art in Arnhem Land*, by A. P. Elkin, R. and C. Berndt, pp. 61–83

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114 Since writing this book, the author and his wife have been able to spend a further period of anthropological research (1949-1950) in western Arnhem Land around Oenpelli, and in central-northern Arnhem Land about Milingimbi Island in the Crocodile Group.

●126 At Oenpelli the complete series of Kunapipi rituals was seen twice through, photographed, and descriptions recorded; to supplement this, a mass of data 114 was collected in relation to Kunapipi song cycles and mythology (mostly in interlinear text). The Oenpelli rituals relating to this cult have been introduced 794 to this area within recent years, and were under the direction of ceremonial headmen with Gunwinggu affinities, whose home territory lay further to the south-east towards south-western Arnhem Land (the source of the Liverpool and Wilton Rivers). The cult had been brought into north-central Arnhem [177] Land from the south on the one hand, and from north-central Arnhem Land via the source of the Liverpool on the other. The rituals witnessed by the author were the first complete series ever performed at Oenpelli; a number of adult [88] Gunwinggu men (otherwise fully initiated) passed through them as "novices", being obliged to undertake all the customary and relevant obligations. The first series was held about half-way through the monsoonal season, and the second a little before the onset of the dry weather.

In the Milingimbi region full groups of songs relating to the Kunapipi were recorded, together with all relevant data.

The above will be discussed and presented in a future volume dealing with the regions concerned.

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Illustrations

796 28 Neophytes wait with heads bowed, before the showing of the sacred Djanggawul emblems. 224

778 29 Meditation before the sacred Goanna Tail *rangga*. Postulants caress the feathered pendants—symbolic of the sun's rays, the clitorises, foreskins or umbilical cords. 225
796

Map 8–9

NOTE ON ILLUSTRATIONS

126 The crayon drawings illustrated here represent only a small selection of those available, and stored at the Department of Anthropology, Sydney University. They do not show to advantage in black and white and it is hoped that later on a wider selection will be presented in colour. Only brief descriptions of each drawing have been inserted here; each drawing contains a great deal of detail, which ideally requires considerable explanation, not possible in this volume.

All these drawings were collected between 29th January, 1947 and 15th June, 1947 at Yirrkalla, in north-eastern Arnhem Land. They were done on brown paper with coloured lumber crayon and black pencil, and were used by the writer as an adjunct to his field notes. They conform to traditional patterns and representations, which would normally be drawn on stringy bark boards in coloured ochres.

[532]

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FOREWORD

THE Djanggawul religious cult of north-eastern and north-central Arnhem Land has been selected for detailed study because it is more important to the Aborigines themselves than other religious cults in that region. It is older established than, for example, the well-known Wauwalak cycle[1] which sponsors the *djunggawon*, *kunapipi* and *ngurlmag* rituals. The Wauwalak themselves are really the daughters of the Djanggawul, while the *kunapipi* and *ngurlmag* have both been introduced into eastern Arnhem Land. The Djanggawul myth substantiates and gives traditional sanction to the performance of its relevant rituals, known as the *dua nara*. *Dua* is the name of the moiety primarily concerned with this myth and its rituals; the opposite moiety, the *jiritja*, has a counterpart in the *jiritja nara*, sanctioned by Laintjung, an Ancestral Being who is usually described in conjunction with his son, Banaitja. The Djanggawul, Laintjung, Banaitja and the Wauwalak are the principal ancestral characters who, in eastern Arnhem Land, serve as institutors of religious ritual, dogma and behaviour. However, the Djanggawul Brother and Sisters are by far the most important of these. The *dua nara* Djanggawul cult is also more conservative than, for example, that of Laintjung and Banaitja, for the latter has admitted alien elements, whereas the former has remained, as far as we can ascertain, more purely traditional.

During the course of field work in the Yirrkalla region of north-eastern Arnhem Land, the importance of Djanggawul ritual and songs was brought forcibly to my attention. The Aborigines

[1] W. L. Warner, *A Black Civilization*, New York, 1937, pp. 244-334. See also R. Berndt, *Kunapipi*, Cheshire, Melbourne, 1951, Chapter III.

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themselves considered the Djanggawul to be the dominant figures in the Ancestral Times, and this attitude was borne out in the reverence they gave and the attention they paid to all features relating to the Djanggawul. Even those of the opposite moiety, people who looked to Laintjung and Banaitja, admitted the primary importance of the *dua* Djanggawul. I was fortunate, during this period, in being able to examine and record a number of versions of Djanggawul mythology from a relatively wide range of informants, the majority of whom were ceremonial headmen for their particular linguistic groups, and in addition to record in detail the greater part of the associated song cycle. I was able also to attend most of the *dua nara* rituals that took place during my visit. My knowledge of these rituals and songs was considerably enhanced later after a further visit to the north-central region, Milingimbi, where the Djanggawul song cycle was again obtained in detail, and relevant rituals observed.

The social organization and the culture of eastern Arnhem Land have already been treated partially in other works,[1] so that there is no need here for repetition. The reader is warned, however, that he will find it necessary to refer to these for information on various points such as the *dua-jiritja* moiety system, the clan and linguistic group organization, marriage rules, economic background and natural resources of this region, and so on, which although relevant to this study cannot here be treated in full. Arnhem Land is to-day an Aboriginal Reserve in the north-eastern region of the Northern Territory of Australia,[2] and a similar cultural pattern extends from Blue Mud Bay in the south-east to Cape Stewart on the north-central coast. That is to say, all the Aborigines within this area (approximately 1,500 to 2,000) possess a common social organization and religious ideology, and speak varying dialects of one

[1] *Vide* L. Warner, *op. cit.*, 1937; also, by the same author, 'Morphology and Functions of the Australian Murngin Type of Kinship', *American Anthropologist*, n.s., 33, 2, 184; T. T. Webb, 'Tribal Organization in Eastern Arnhem Land', *Oceania*, Vol. III, No. 4; A. P. Elkin, 'Marriage and Descent in East Arnhem Land', *Oceania*, Vol. III, No. 4, pp. 412-16, and his 'The Complexity of Social Organization in Arnhem Land', *Southwestern Journal of Anthropology*, Vol. 6, No. 1, pp. 1-20; W. E. Lawrence and G. P. Murdock, 'Murngin Social Organization', *American Anthropologist*, 1949, Vol. 51, No. 1, pp. 58-65; A. P. Elkin, R. and C. Berndt, *Art in Arnhem Land*, Cheshire, Melbourne, 1950, and *University of Chicago Press*, 1950, pp. 20-7; R. Berndt, *Kunapipi*, Cheshire, Melbourne, 1951, Chapter I *b*.

[2] For its geographical position and natural resources, see A. P. Elkin, R. and C. Berndt, *op. cit.*, 1950, pp. 20-1, R. Berndt, *Kunapipi*, Chapter I *a*, and R. and C. Berndt, *Arnhem Land—Its History and Its People*, for publication, Cheshire, Melbourne. See also accompanying map to this volume.

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language. Their society is constructed on the moiety principle, and descent is in all cases primarily patrilineal. There is no clearly defined tribe, but a series of linguistic groups associated with clans; all of these may be called, collectively, the Wulamba bloc of the Miwaitj language group (referring to the sum total of the different dialects). Yirrkalla is situated on the extreme north-east corner of Arnhem Land between Melville Bay and Cape Arnhem, and Aborigines gather there from places as far distant as Blue Mud and Caledon and Trial Bays, Rose River, and Woodah and Groote Islands in the south and south-east, and Arnhem and Buckingham Bays, Elcho, English Company and Wessel Islands in the north-west. Milingimbi is in the Crocodile Island group on the central-north coast; it is also a meeting place for members of many groups, particularly those from the mainland around the Blyth, Goyder and Woolen Rivers.

Virtually all the writer's field work has been carried out through the medium of the native language, both at Yirrkalla and Milingimbi. Knowledge of local dialects is essential in social anthropological work, and particularly in a study of Aboriginal religion. Field work at Yirrkalla was carried out in 1946–7 and at Milingimbi in 1950 (a total period of thirteen months actually working on the field in this particular region); the first period was made possible by grants from the Australian National Research Council, and was under the auspices of the Department of Anthropology, University of Sydney, while the latter period was financed by grants from the Research Committee of the University of Sydney and the Department of Anthropology of the same University. Writing up of this material was also made possible by grants from the Research Committee.

So many informants have helped in the process of collecting the data presented here that a list of their names would be tiresome and meaningless to the reader. Not only main *dua* moiety headmen, but also those of the *jiritja* moiety, contributed; and these were members of many linguistic groups. In addition, attitudes of local Aboriginal women towards this religious cult were discussed with them by my wife (Catherine Berndt), and this aided directly the analysis of certain sections. This study of the Djanggawul, then, does not express solely the information and attitudes of male natives, but takes into account both male and female elements in the culture. The practice in recording the interlinear phonetic renderings of the songs was for informants belonging to a particular area through which the Djanggawul passed to put forward those songs themselves, for it was their country and they were expected to have more complete knowledge of the songs. In this way, each

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part was presented by the most capable leaders and song men available for the particular territory concerned. This was the case also in recording the myth, which unfortunately cannot here be presented in its phonetic rendering. All features of the myth and songs were collectively discussed, and interpretations made by the Aborigines themselves.

A considerable amount of thought has gone into the question of presenting the available data on the Djanggawul. It has finally been decided to present as much as possible of the 'raw' material without, apart from interpretation and partial analysis, engaging in theoretical discussion, for material of this type obviously lends itself to such treatment. It is our contention that the rôle of the anthropologist in the Australian Aboriginal field should be one of recording data, and of presenting these in an accessible form, so that the maximum amount of material may be available for the consideration of students interested primarily in theory. That is not to say that we disparage that particular branch of anthropological science, but that we ourselves are more intimately concerned with Australian Aboriginal problems as such and, although taking into account the wider implication of our material, we must of necessity restrict our outlook to some extent. This, to us, is an important point, for we in Australia are acutely aware of the limitations of available anthropological data. Considering the geographical extent of the Australian continent, and the apparent diversity of Aboriginal cultural groups within it, we must admit that our knowledge of these societies is sparse. It is our duty, as we see it, to compensate in some degree for this deficiency. We do of course realize that, although our problems seem to us momentous, they diminish somewhat with distance, and when viewed in relation to the sum total of human experience throughout the world they become of much less pressing significance.

During the last two decades Australian Anthropology has received an impetus, principally through the personal efforts of Professors A. P. Elkin and A. R. Radcliffe-Brown, and the Australian National Research Council has sent on to the field a series of anthropologists: this activity, and its results, have helped to counteract in some degree the errors of the past. Nevertheless, we in Australia are aware that although much has been done, there still remains more to do.

To say 'errors of the past' is not to disparage the monumental works of Sir Baldwin Spencer and F. J. Gillen, Carl Strehlow and others. What they lacked in anthropological method they made up in energy, and in their power to stimulate interest among anthropologists and others; they inspired, for instance, Emile Durkheim

The Djanggawul Songs

533 songs are possessed of a sacred power peculiar to the Djanggawul.[1]
182 The songs, since they 'belong' to the divine Beings, give the ritual an atmosphere of reality, in the sense of veracity, and a deep consciousness of affiliation and continuity with these Beings themselves. Sacred songs, sung on the ceremonial ground by hereditary leaders, in conjunction with ritual and dancing, and in the presence of religious symbols or emblems, vividly reflect and re-inspire the religious emotions of all who hear them.

126 The songs presented here are translations, and have inevitably
638 suffered in the process. To appreciate all the subtle turns of phrase,
128 the abundant allusions and so on, one should read them in the original, interlinearly translated, in conjunction with copious notes.[2] It is only through understanding of the language that we can derive the fullest benefit from these songs.

Nevertheless, we have adhered strictly to the literal translation of all words in the songs, endeavouring to retain the beauty of the original. Difficulty has been experienced, however, in finding satisfactory English equivalents for certain words. The translation errs, perhaps, on the side of restraint, for many of the English words used (unlike those in the Aboriginal text) may appear prosaic and lacking in poetic value. The different words referring to sounds of various kinds, for instance, are not easy to transcribe: and 'noise' is a poor, although often necessary, substitute.

No attempt has been made to conform to the original rhythm and metre, since this would involve manipulating the translation at the expense of its actual content. The arrangement into lines conforms to the pauses made by the Aborigines themselves when singing or reciting.

128 Comments or notes are not attached to each song, as in the case of the originals, but any points that seem to need discussion have been referred to in the section immediately following each part of the cycle. For convenience, and to facilitate the gradual development of our analysis, we have set out ten parts to this epic, corresponding to various stages in the travels of the Djanggawul.

As the songs progress, from one stage to another, we may follow the symbolism and intent which have already been indicated in earlier chapters. The significance of each part will be treated briefly at its conclusion, so that at the end of the epic the whole may be viewed in proper perspective.

[1] In *Kunapipi* (*op. cit.*, Chapter VII) it was said that 'the songs are the echo of those first sung by the Ancestral Beings: the spirit of the echo goes on through timeless space, and when we sing, we take up the echo and make sound.' This applies also to the Djanggawul songs.

[2] These are to be published separately through the journal *Oceania* as a monograph, on account of the great number of phonetic texts. The serious reader or student is advised to read these in conjunction with the translations set out here.